A Comparative Typological Analysis of Passive Constructions in English and Uzbek: Structure, Function, And Discourse Patterns

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Abstract. *This article presents a comparative typological analysis of passive constructions in English and Uzbek, examining how their structural, functional, and discourse-related features reflect broader distinctions between an analytic and an agglutinative language. Unlike earlier studies that focus mainly on formal similarities, this research adopts a functional–pragmatic approach, exploring how passives influence information flow, agent defocusing, and communicative intent. English relies primarily on auxiliary-based periphrastic passives, whereas Uzbek employs morphologically marked verb forms in which agent suppression is the default. The study also demonstrates how discourse norms, genre conventions, and cultural communication styles contribute to distinct passive preferences in each language.*

Key words: *passive constructions, typology, English language, Uzbek language, agent suppression, morphosyntax, discourse functions, information structure, analytic and agglutinative languages.*

Introduction

Passive constructions are an essential linguistic mechanism for controlling information flow in discourse. They enable speakers to foreground the patient or result of an action while backgrounding or omitting the agent entirely. English, as an analytic language, expresses passive meaning syntactically—typically through auxiliary verbs combined with past participles. By contrast, Uzbek, an agglutinative language, forms passives morphologically, attaching suffixes such as *-il, -in,* or *-n* to the verb stem, sometimes accompanied by the auxiliary *bo'lmoq* in complex tenses.

This study expands on earlier descriptive analyses by providing a function-oriented typological comparison. It investigates how English and Uzbek employ passive constructions not only structurally but also to fulfill pragmatic, stylistic, and discourse-based functions. Building on the work of Huddleston & Pullum (2002), Quirk et al. (1985), Rahimov (2012), Kadirova (2015), and other key scholars, this article places particular emphasis on how cultural norms and genre conventions shape passive usage patterns.

Literature Review

Studies of the English passive are extensive and well-documented. English grammarians (Quirk et al., 1985; Huddleston & Pullum, 2002) describe the passive as a highly productive syntactic alternation used to background agents, highlight objects, or achieve stylistic neutrality. Corpus analyses (Biber et al., 1999) show that passive constructions are especially frequent in scientific, academic, and bureaucratic registers.

Uzbek linguistic scholarship emphasizes the morphological nature of the passive. Authors such as Sayfiyev (2000) and Rahimov (2012) show that Uzbek passives are used primarily in official, administrative, and formal settings. Kadirova (2015) notes that Uzbek's morphological passives inherently suppress the agent, differing fundamentally from English in both structure and communicative orientation.

Cross-linguistic typological studies (Comrie, 1977; Siewierska, 1984) provide broader theoretical perspectives. They argue that the use and frequency of passive constructions are shaped not only by grammatical possibilities but also by discourse traditions within speech communities—an argument that strongly informs the current study.

Methodology

The present study adopts a comparative typological and functional–pragmatic methodology to investigate passive constructions in English and Uzbek. This approach enables a systematic analysis of how structural, functional, and discourse-related features interact across two typologically distinct languages. To ensure a comprehensive and balanced dataset, the research draws on multiple sources. For English, academic articles, news texts, and conversational transcripts were examined, providing a range of formal and informal registers. For Uzbek, administrative documents, newspaper texts, and literary excerpts were selected, reflecting the language's typical use of passive forms in formal, institutional, and stylistically rich contexts. Additionally, several constructed examples were included to clearly illustrate cross-linguistic contrasts that may not be fully observable in naturalistic data.

The analysis focuses on four central dimensions that jointly shape the nature and behavior of passive constructions. First, the study examines the morphological and syntactic structures through which passives are formed in each language. Second, it investigates strategies of agent expression and suppression, considering when and why speakers choose to mention or omit the agent. Third, the functional–pragmatic dimension is explored by analyzing how passives contribute to information structure, politeness strategies, and discourse organization. Finally, the study evaluates genre-based frequency and stylistic distribution to determine how often and in what types of texts passive constructions typically occur.

By integrating both qualitative and typological comparisons within a mixed-method framework, this methodological design allows for a thorough exploration of how structural mechanisms and discourse conventions mutually shape passive usage in English and Uzbek. The combination of diverse textual sources and targeted analysis ensures a nuanced understanding of the similarities and differences in passive constructions across the two languages.

Analysis and Results

Structural Differences

The structural analysis reveals clear typological distinctions between English and Uzbek passive constructions. English forms the passive syntactically, relying on auxiliary verbs such as *be* or *get* combined with the past participle. This structure allows tense, aspect, and modality to be encoded primarily on the auxiliary verb, as seen in examples like *The project was completed* or *The report is being prepared.* The expression of the agent is optional and, when included, is introduced by a *by-phrase*. This syntactic nature reflects the analytic character of English.

In contrast, Uzbek passives are formed morphologically through the use of suffixes such as -il, -in, or -n, which attach directly to the verb stem. Examples like *xat yozildi* ('the letter was written') illustrate the morphological marking that carries the passive meaning. In compound or complex tenses, the auxiliary *bo'lmoq* is used to express temporal or aspectual distinctions. Agent expression in Uzbek is generally rare and, when necessary, is indicated by the postposition *tomonidan*. These structural tendencies reflect Uzbek's typologically agglutinative system, where grammatical relationships are expressed through affixation rather than syntactic manipulation.

Thus, English primarily employs a syntactic passive, whereas Uzbek relies on a morphological passive, highlighting a fundamental structural contrast between the two languages.

Agent Expression and Suppression

A comparative examination of agent expression reveals substantial differences between English and Uzbek. English frequently allows and even encourages the explicit mention of the agent through the *by-phrase*, although its inclusion remains optional depending on communicative intent. This flexibility aligns with English discourse norms that value clarity and explicitness.

Conversely, Uzbek demonstrates a strong preference for agent suppression. The agent is rarely mentioned and, when it is, the marker *tomonidan* is used primarily in formal or highly explicit contexts. The default strategy in Uzbek passive constructions is to omit the agent entirely. This preference reflects deeper cultural and communicative patterns associated with indirectness, politeness, and institutionalized communication norms.

These patterns illustrate how grammatical structures are shaped not only by linguistic rules but also by social expectations within each speech community.

Functional Differences The functional analysis further highlights distinct communicative motivations behind the use of passive constructions in English and Uzbek. In English, passive clauses serve several key purposes: they help convey scientific objectivity (*It was observed that…*), they allow speakers to downplay or omit the agent, and they focus attention on outcomes or results rather than on the performer of the action. Additionally, English passives contribute to stylistic neutrality, particularly in bureaucratic or technical writing.

Uzbek passives, while serving some similar purposes, carry additional culturally and institutionally grounded functions. They are commonly used to establish a formal and authoritative tone, as exemplified by expressions like *qaror qabul qilindi*. They conform to the norms of official discourse, where depersonalization is valued and explicit agent reference is minimized. Passives in Uzbek also help avoid direct attribution of personal responsibility and emphasize institutional or collective actions rather than individual agency.

These functional differences demonstrate how each language uses passives to achieve discourse goals shaped by cultural, stylistic, and communicative expectations.

Genre-Based Frequency The distribution of passive constructions across genres also differs significantly between English and Uzbek. In English, passives are highly frequent in academic writing, where objectivity and result-focused descriptions are prioritized. They also appear extensively in journalistic texts and occur moderately in everyday conversation, reflecting their flexibility across registers.

In Uzbek, however, the highest concentration of passive constructions is found in administrative and governmental documents, where formality and depersonalization are characteristic features. Academic writing also employs passives, though to a lesser degree than in English. In everyday conversation, passive forms are relatively uncommon, as Uzbek speakers tend to prefer active constructions unless the agent is unknown or intentionally omitted.

These findings confirm that passive usage in both languages is strongly influenced by genre, style, and social conventions, with English demonstrating broader register flexibility and Uzbek maintaining more restricted, formality-driven usage.

Discussion

The comparative analysis reveals that English and Uzbek use passive constructions for different communicative and cultural purposes, despite superficial similarities. English speakers employ the passive to manage information flow, maintain objectivity, and foreground results. Uzbek speakers, however, use passives mainly in formal registers where agent suppression is socially preferred.

These findings support Siewierska's (1984) argument that passive usage patterns reflect deeper discourse traditions rather than purely grammatical options. Uzbek's consistent omission of agents aligns with collectivistic communication values and institutional discourse norms. English, in contrast, reflects a communicative culture favoring explicitness, transparency, and syntactic flexibility.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that passive constructions in English and Uzbek differ significantly in structural formation—syntactic versus morphological—and in their discourse motivations and communicative functions. English passives are flexible and widely used across genres, while Uzbek passives are tightly linked to formality and agent suppression.

Understanding these typological and functional differences can greatly assist translators, language teachers, and researchers working in cross-linguistic discourse analysis.

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